

OCT. 16/95

THE MCGILL DAILY

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Struggling to be subtle since 1911

MONDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1995

The question of energy in Québec

BY ANUP GREWAL

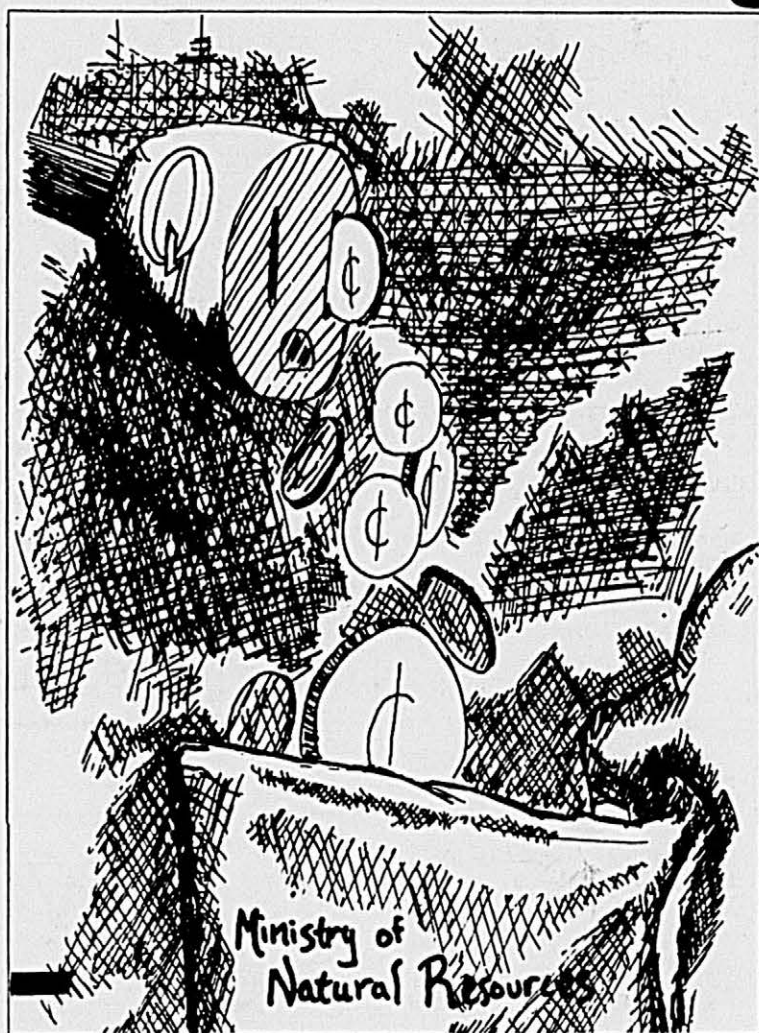
After years of lobbying by environmental groups for a public inquiry into energy production and consumption in Québec, the Ministry of Natural Resources began a public debate on energy in September.

Many environmental groups and concerned individuals presented ideas to the debate's traveling panel. Others boycotted the process.

John Bucarne of the Mouvement au Courante, a watchdog group on energy issues, says that environmental groups had been lobbying for a debate that was "[as] wide and open as possible and we don't think that this has happened."

Bucarne echoed the view expressed by many other groups who feel that the ministry should not be the one directing the inquiry. According to Bucarne, "this debate is not sufficiently independent to address the issue [of energy use in Québec] because the Ministry of Natural Resources, who is running the show, has made the decisions in the past and is going to be making them now."

"The ministry is one of the parties that still needs to justify its ac-



DAILY GRAPHIC BY MAX FRANCISCO

Energy debate still in interests of ministry

tions from the past. If they are holding the hearings, it is like judging and being judged," said Bucarne.

However, Minister of Natural Resources François Gendron wrote that the ministry wanted to create an energy policy for Québec that represents a "collective goal."

Inviting all Québeckers to participate in this "collective effort," Gendron wrote that any assessment of the challenges Québec faces in its energy policy must be "a shared analysis in which all the groups and people concerned will have genuinely participated."

The Parti Québécois supported the idea of a public inquiry while in opposition. This has been their response.

While many applaud the intention, environmental groups charge that the type of inquiry being conducted is neither a collective nor a genuine effort on the part of the ministry.

Beginning in September, the ministry held a series of hearings throughout the province, in the regions of Québec, Montréal, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Côte-Nord, Mauricie, Bois-Franc, Saguenay, Lac St.-Jean, Outaouais and Bas-Saint-Laurent-Gaspésie.

Bucarne pointed out that "The ministry has not advertised the debate and we feel that this is partly because of the strong hand the ministry has over the whole thing."

The scope of the debate was also limited. Gendron restricted people's presentations to the areas of energy efficiency, regulation, research and regionalisation.

Groups present despite restrictions

Tom Holzinger, a member of the James Bay Committee, which presented in front of the Montréal panel, viewed the debate as a consulta-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

STUDENT HEALTH PLAN UP FOR DEBATE

BY ROBIN PERELLE AND ROBERTA LAUCKE

Next Monday, October 23, McGill's undergraduate Students' Society (SSMU) will launch its own referendum asking students to decide, among other things, on the future of their health plan.

According to the options SSMU has decided to present, students will have to choose between paying higher premiums or losing their benefits.

Currently, McGill students pay \$43.80 a year for an 80 per cent subsidy on prescription drugs, including oral contraceptives, and accident insurance. Implemented in 1991, the plan was designed to channel the collective bargaining power of McGill's 15 000 undergrads to ease the burden of expensive medical treatments.

In the health plan's first years of existence, however, it was not well publicised. Students paid their fees without claiming the reimbursements to which they were entitled, and the plan's carrier, Seaboard Life Insurance Company, racked up a sizeable profit.

When last year's student council finally took steps to raise awareness and rectify the situation, claims jumped 300 per cent — leaving Sea-

board with a sudden loss and SSMU's VP Finance Kelly Remail with the task of readjusting the balance.

"The SSMU health plan is unsustainable in its present form," Remail stated in a recent report to council.

"While Seaboard Life has agreed to absorb a substantial loss in the upcoming year, they cannot be expected to continue to do so for 1996-1997 contract period," he continued. Hence the limited options of either increasing fees or cutting benefits.

"No one wants to give students less of a choice. It is a question of [the insurance company's] need," added SSMU's Broker Lev Bukhman, who is responsible for representing students' needs to Seaboard Life Insurance Company.

"Take a look at the health plan in the private sector. The employment group health plan costs hundreds of dollars a year. They're given complete coverage but it costs more... We're trying to keep the cost as cheap as possible. I can't see any other alternative," Bukhman explained.

Situation "untenable", says

Seaboard

But many students do see other alternatives, especially considering the bigger picture of Seaboard's four-year relationship with SSMU. In the first three years of the health plan, Seaboard made a profit of approximately \$1 200 000 off unclaimed student fees, a fact that seems to have been forgotten in the sudden rush to readjust the balance.

"If students could incur a \$1 200 000 loss over three years

"If students could incur a \$1 200 000 loss over three years wouldn't it be reasonable for Seaboard to let us profit for once?"

— Roland Orfaly, the Ad Hoc Health Plan Advisory Committee.

wouldn't it be reasonable for Seaboard to let us profit for once?" asked Roland Orfaly, a member of last year's Ad-hoc Health Plan Advisory Committee.

Bukhman insists that the re-evaluation is standard procedure. "Any company would be in the same situation. Ultimately this is not about Seaboard... Any company would look at the current claim expenses [because] they have to have money to pay for the benefits and cover administrative expenses," he said.

"Their claims and administra-

tive expenses have to equal premiums. They have to balance out," Bukhman maintained.

At the last council meeting Athletics Representative Karen Brenhouse challenged Bukhman to look past last year's shortfall to the overall record of imbalance in Seaboard's favour. Bukhman assured her that he had, and that the situation was still untenable.

"In 1995 claim expenses increased 300 per cent. Seaboard lost money and agreed to renew the contract knowing they'd lose even more," he said. "[But] in 1996-97

Seaboard will not continue their contract at this level."

Less than a week after she tried to defend student interests in council, Brenhouse seemed convinced by Bukhman and Remail's logic. "I understand that we have to make changes because Seaboard lost a lot of money. With the cost of living [going up] more people are using the plan so premiums have to go up," she stated.

"Even if we were to pay an extra \$10 dollars a month, look at our savings. It balances out to cost us a lot less," she insisted.

Remail is hoping that all students come to see it that way. In an attempt to restructure the health plan in a way that will please Seaboard, our VP Finance has put four questions on the ballot.

The first question asks students if they want to keep the plan or not. The second asks permission to raise premiums \$12.24 a year bringing the total to \$56.04 per year.

"If students vote no [to an increase] benefits must be lowered from 80 to 65 per cent coverage on prescription drugs," Remail stated.

The third question asks students if they agree to pay an additional \$6.00 per year in order to get a \$50 subsidy on the \$75 Hepatitis B vaccine. The last question asks students to grant SSMU authorisation to raise premiums by another 10 per cent in the future, "in case adjustments are needed."

In a poll taken just last spring, 89 per cent of students said they liked the current health plan and voted to maintain its coverage without modification. A whopping 92 per cent also said they approved of benefits like the 90 per cent prescription drug subsidy.

Despite this clear indication of student preference, the five SSMU executives unilaterally cut the drug subsidy from 90 to 80 per cent last July, deciding, without student input, that students should stop paying for non-essential "frills".

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The JET Programme

On Wednesday October 18th, an information session about the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme will be given at McGill University by the Japanese Consulate in Montreal in cooperation with the McGill Career and Placement Service. Guests from the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) Tokyo will talk as will one Montreal area JET Alumni.

TIME: 2:00 - 4:00 PM

PLACE: Leacock Rm. 232

DATE: Wednesday October 18th, 1995



SSMU FALL REFERENDUM OCTOBER 23-25, 1995

POLL LOCATIONS AND HOURS

Location	Mon. Oct. 23	Tues. Oct. 24	Wed. Oct. 25
Bishop Mountain Hall	11:30-2:00	11:30-2:00 4:30-7:00	2:00-5:00
Bronfman	11:00-4:00	10:00-2:30	10:00-4:00
Burnside Hall	11:00-4:00	10:00-2:30	10:00-4:00
Chancellor Day Hall	Closed	10:00-2:30	10:00-4:00
Currie Gym	Closed	2:00-7:00	12:00-5:00
Douglas Hall	Closed	5:00-7:00	Closed
Education	Closed	1:00-4:00	10:00-4:00
Leacock	11:00-4:00	10:00-2:30	10:00-4:00
McConnell Engineering	11:00-4:00	10:00-2:30	10:00-4:00
McIntyre Med.	Closed	1:30-7:00	1:30-4:00
Music	Closed	10:00-1:00	11:00-2:30
Redpath Library	11:00-5:00	10:00-7:00	10:00-5:00
Royal Victoria College	11:30-2:00	11:30-2:00 5:00-7:00	Closed
Shatner Centre	11:00-5:00	10:00-7:00	10:00-5:00
Solin Hall	Closed	4:00-7:00	Closed
Stewart Biology	11:00-1:30	10:00-1:00	10:00-1:00
Thomson House	11:30-2:00	11:30-2:00	Closed

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Executive Director
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Tuesday
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ENERGY HEARINGS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tion where the ministry already knows what it wants and is asking for legitimization.

"The minister and his civil servants wanted a consultation and a report rationalising the existing pattern of production and consumption."

Despite these concerns, groups like Mouvement au Courante and the James Bay committee made reports to the panel.

Holzinger commented that the James Bay Committee, as one of the first groups in Québec to "beat the drums for a public inquiry into the energy question," discussed at length whether or not they would present before the panel.

"When the ministry proposed the consultation, we asked is it better to boycott a consultation where the questions are set so that it limits who can talk and what can be talked about...but [the consultation] was in the direction of what we had called for so we decided to participate," explained Holzinger.

However, the James Bay Committee agreed not to limit themselves to the government's questions.

Others like Bucarne feel that boycotting is not the answer. "When you boycott something, you don't get a tribune to say anything, good or bad."

The timing of the debate is ideal in many ways. Québec is at a point in which, according to Holzinger "everyone would agree that the pattern of consumption and production need to be changed."

And now, as the energy situation in the province is stable, there is "time to think of a long term program and possibly even spend two or three years."

Mega projects and mega job myths

Since the 1970s, Québec has focused development of its energy resources on mega projects such as large dams and the diversion of rivers. While this has created a surplus of electricity for the province and has allowed Hydro Québec to keep its prices low, the environmental and social costs have been high.

Holzinger argued that the surplus of energy has to be examined in the context that "these people [Hydro Québec] diverted too many rivers and damned too many rivers... and destroyed too much habitat."

The James Bay Committee, formed out of the international Alternative Energy conference held in Montréal in 1989, itself took on the mandate of pressuring the Québec government. They lobbied Robert Bourassa's Liberals to stop the mega dam in the north known as James Bay II. This dam would have flooded vast amounts of land and impinged on the property of native communities in the area.

"We took up the cudgels to oppose any attempt to increase the consumption of energy and damming of Québec's rivers," said Holzinger. The Committee continues to maintain this stand.

The argument that big projects mean job creation has been used by advocates of the mega dams for years.

Both Bucarne and Holzinger stressed that making energy efficiency and alternative resources for energy (such as solar or bio-mass energy) does not impinge on the creation of jobs or the economy of

the province.

Bucarne insisted that "the era of mega projects is passed... We must now look at smaller development and smaller industries. Energy efficiency must be looked at and it can create jobs."

Holzinger echoed this idea saying that if all the social costs and benefits are added up, "the picture comes overwhelmingly in the favour of energy efficiency."

According to Holzinger "anyone who says that building dams creates jobs that we otherwise would not have is not aware; they are purporting a myth from the 1970s era of mega projects."

Both the James Bay Committee and Mouvement au Courant presented these views in front of the commissions.

However, neither is optimistic that a radical change in the way the province uses its energy will result from the ministry's debate.

"The problem is," said Bucarne, "Hydro Québec is still full of people who are experts in building dams. They have a pride in having done that and it is hard to change their minds."

Bucarne added that the large representation of people with interests in the energy industry during the presentations to the panel is also telling. "Everybody with clout or any economic gain to make was there to present. As for the public, who is going to be directly affected, there was little representation."

However, all is not lost. Holzinger pointed to the likelihood of forming an independent board or Regie to monitor the actions of Hydro Québec. This will mean a greater level of accountability on

the part of the energy industry in the future.

Holzinger commented that, although there will be some reform that comes out of the ministry's inquiry, "the basic pattern will not be touched either by the consultation or the follow up."

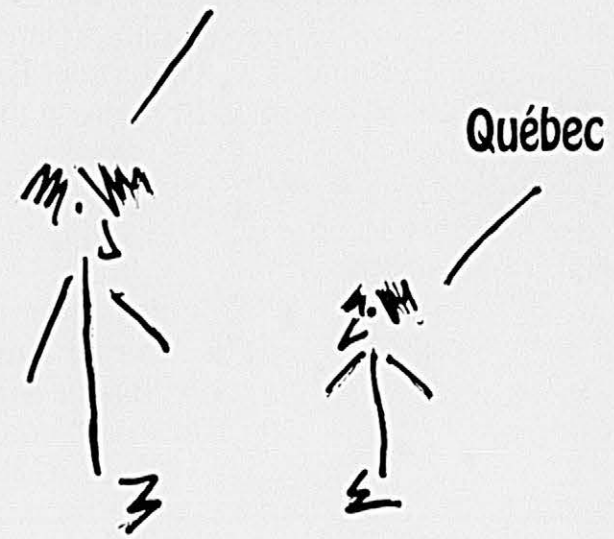
The report by the panel is to be made at the end of the year. Bucarne said that "we can only hope that the presence of the three environmen-

tal groups on the panel will have some influence."

And if it doesn't, Bucarne commented, then environmental groups will just have to keep up with their work.

"Environmental groups can try to keep up interest in the issue. There are all sorts of studies that came out and there is a lot of information that we can hopefully continue to work on," he said.

If Parizeau, Bouchard, and Dumont are on a boat and the boat sinks, who will get out alive?



CARTOON BY LONDON

LETTERS

SHAKTI WOMANIST COLLECTIVE PROTESTS PROPOSAL OF CLOSING THE DAILY

TO THE DAILY,

We would like to thank SSMU for showing that you don't have to be a federal, provincial or municipal government to disregard constituents' needs.

You can learn these skills here at McGill by suppressing voices of dissent, like the *McGill Daily*, that bring up "uncomfortable" issues which regressive student governments would rather ignore.

Thank you, SSMU, for "representing" us by sanctioning a proposal to shut down one of the few Canadian newspapers which addresses issues of gender, race, class, culture and ethnicity affecting immigrant, lesbian, gay and bisexual

women, as well as women of colour.

Thank you for your insensitivity in attacking the only truly independent media voice at McGill - and one of the few in the country - at a time when women are experiencing welfare cutbacks, funding cuts to women's service and research organizations, high unemployment and the threat of workfare programs. Your policy goes nicely with the times.

Thanks for not stopping to consider how the loss of this kind of forum might hurt the women's movement on this campus and across this country.

In short, SSMU, thanks for your determination to make the student press conform to your backward political agenda. Isn't the removal of independent media voices a sign that "democracy" is under attack?

Thanks for insensitively ignoring a large part of your constituency, namely women of colour, who care about these issues. We will return the favour by remembering your behaviour when next you come begging for our votes.

THE MEMBERS OF THE SHAKTI WOMANIST COLLECTIVE

CORRECTION

TO THE DAILY

I would like to point out to the *Daily* that an error was made in the printing of my previous letter. A quotation mark was placed on the end of the last sentence instead of the second to last. A minor error (intentional or unintentional) like this can change people's perception of the satire involved. The last sentence of the letter was a comment separate of the quotation. I clearly separated the two apart when I wrote the letter.

VINH NGUYEN
U2 PSYCHOLOGY

CRITIQUE OF NASRIN UNINFORMED

TO THE DAILY

Something quite remarkable appeared in a recent issue of The

McGill Daily Culture. In their commentary on Taslima Nasrin (Oct 5-11), Melanie Newton and Hasan Karrar provide us with a rare and unusual critique of Western feminism. Newton and Karrar argue that Taslima Nasrin and her supporters are bigots who fail to understand the complexities of Islamic fundamentalism as an issue and who wish to demonize Islam. However, like a poorly-researched term paper, their critique manages to confuse and misinform.

For example, Newton and Karrar flounder in their references to Hinduism. They state that Muslim and Hindu fundamentalism are feeding off each other in Bangladesh and the rest of South Asia. This is, of course, not true. In both Pakistan and Bangladesh, Hindus are a small and powerless minority. They have never been a threat to Islam, either ideologically or politically. As in most Muslim nations, Pakistan's and Bangladesh's religious minorities have been politically and socially castrated. In contrast, in India, Hinduism's compassion and tolerance have en-

sured the just treatment of all minorities. In fact, throughout history, Zoroastrians, Baha'is, Jews and Tibetan Buddhists have all found refuge in India. Even today, many Bangladeshis, Burmese and Pakistani refugees seek freedom from persecution in India.

Newton and Karra also err in stating that Hindu "fundamentalism" poses a threat to Muslims in India. Proud Hindus have always organized to promote, protect, and rejuvenate their religion. These organizations have been essential to Hinduism since Hinduism is a non-proselytizing religion. They do not seek to oppress the minorities nor deny them the full liberties they possess. Unfortunately, a fear of Hindu nationalism has been nurtured in India by opportunists who feed upon communalism. In the West, the media has continued its tradition of vilifying Hindus, and in the process has denied the truth.

BHARAT N. PATEL
PHD.2

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3480 McTavish St., Montréal, Qc.,
room B-03, H3A 1X9

Business & Advertising Office:
3480 McTavish St., Montréal, Qc.,
room B-07, H3A 1X9

editorial: (514) 398-6784
business/advertising:
(514) 398-6790
fax: (514) 398-8318

co-ordinating editor: M.J. Milloy
co-ordinating news editor: Robin Perelle
news editors: Anup Grewal, Jacqueline Reis
culture editors: Kevin Siu
features editor: Idella Sturino
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Derek Fung
daily français: Anne Caporal, Atim Leon
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contributors:

Galen Guthrie, Erin Prelypchan, Kathleen Frederickson, Roberta Laucke, Lynn Abrahamian, Melanie Newton, Mike McCullen, Sarah Johnson, Meike Woerdemann, Anh Ducharme, Jobi Kennedy, Erinrose Sullivan and Dave (Layout-for-hire)

business manager: Marian Schrier
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Concordia professor credits students for Oscar nomination.

When Christopher Hinton's "Blackfly" was nominated for an Oscar in the best-animated-short category in 1992, his first reaction was to credit his teaching experience and his students at Concordia's Cinema Department for much of his success. "After you've been in any business for a few years you tend to get stuck in a rut," said Hinton. "Students, on the other hand, come to you with fresh, open minds. Knowing how to listen to them has helped me develop new techniques and explore new ideas which have worked out very well for them and for me".

This cooperative approach to teaching and learning is what attracts students like John Spezzacatena to Concordia. The University's first Master of Fine Arts student in Film Production with a concentration in Animation, Spezzacatena praises Hinton and the program: "The dynamics of the program are just as important as the curriculum. And being taught by people with real experience who recognize students' good ideas is very special".

And there are other valid reasons Concordia is the right university for so many people: more than 160 undergraduate and graduate programs with strong reputations in business studies, communications, psychology, fine arts and engineering; a college system offering a personalized approach to education; a friendly atmosphere with professors who are known for their accessibility; a remarkable choice of programs on a full- and part-time basis; and two campuses with a student body truly representative of Montréal's diverse population.

When you consider that Concordia is also known for being in touch with the real world, you can be assured that what you learn here will go farther out there.



John
Spezzacatena,
MFA student in
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Women from all over the world, representing all sectors of society — from the government to individual citizens — met in China last September for both the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and the parallel Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) forum.

The conferences received much media attention throughout the first two weeks of September. The demonstrations by lesbian groups, the harassment of women by Chinese authorities, the high profile presence of figures such as Hillary Clinton, lent a dramatic edge to the events.

Behind all this, the representatives worked on the Platform for Action, a document which includes many progressive policies for women, such as commitments to programs on domestic violence and victims of war crimes. But a month after the conferences ended, we can wonder about their actual effectiveness.

Soraya Hassalani, a McGill student, went to the NGO conference as a youth delegate, having been nominated by our Students' Society. Soraya has been active at McGill with the advisory committee on Concerns for Women Students to the Dean of Students, and on drafting and implementing a racial harassment policy for McGill.

Taking her experiences with her, the 21 year old participated in the conference, feeling that she could bring a youth's perspective to the debates.

The Daily interviewed Soraya about her experience on October 10.



SORAYA HASSANALI

DAILY PHOTO BY SARAH JOHNSTON

Daily: As part of the Canadian delegation led by Sheila Finestone, did you see a consensus among the delegates? If not, what were some of the divisive issues that arose?

Soraya Hassalali: As you're probably aware, there were two delegations that went, the official delegation who were credited to the actual forum and the delegates who were accredited to just Forum '95, which was the NGO parallel forum. There was a great deal of division between those two groups. The NGOs and their perceptions and their convictions and their ideas on how to shape the Platform For Action in some cases were very much different than what the heads of state, namely Sheila Finestone representing Canada, had in mind. So we saw a clash on a number of issues, particularly the contributions from the NGOs.

What were some of the examples of things you were clashing over?

They were very specific details in terms of language, in terms of what NGOs felt were particularly important to them versus what governments felt, or mainly what Ms. Finestone felt she could compromise on.

..... Canada was very instrumental in pushing, in particular, the inclusion of rape as a war crime... As well, recognition of the harmful effects of foreign occupation.... And then the inclusion of the value of non-remunerated work is another major accomplishment of the document. So as you can see these are real gains which were made.

As I mentioned, the clash between the NGOs and the ministers had to do with particular details. ... Apparently one third of the Platform for Action is being ignored. These issues deal with peace issues. Women in NGOs were concerned with issues such as nuclear testing, cutting military budgets, war as an extension of what the international system is all about... There was a great deal of talk at this conference of having new models, female models, of peace-making, peace-enforcement and that sort of thing. And including women at the table in the peace process. ... But you

don't see any sort of equal representation nor any desire by what is a male standard to even include women or change those paradigms on which the entire international system is based.

Another example where the document did not reflect the NGOs' views were issues of race and colour... There were a number of women of colour caucuses in Beijing and they were attempting to lobby the official delegates on the issues of colour and racism and affirmative action programmes.... As well, something which is a little more relevant to women of the south.... is that of structural adjustment programmes. They were not included or addressed in the Platform. A number of

"We want action and not just words.... It does seem that there are some mixed signals there, and what is needed is a strong united effort and a direct policy statement on the direction with funds committed to projects, women's rights and the promotion of those".

NGOs were very disappointed in that, especially in light of the fact that... this issue overlaps two of the main 12 areas of concern. As well, sexual orientation was not included. It got a lot of coverage... In Vienna, only three member states verbally supported the inclusion of the word 'sexual orientation' as a right, and in Beijing over 30 states.

The official UN Fourth World Conference was, at least, touted for its ability to achieve consensus. To what extent can the same be said about the NGO conference? Was it successful in achieving consensus?

Pre-Beijing, there certainly was not consensus among NGO groups. There were a number of groups that boycotted the conference for many reasons, one being the choice of location, and China's national

Action

At

BY IDELLA STURINO AND ANUP GREWAL

policies....

Personally, my experience was a positive one. I really did see an effort on the part of people to try to look past differences and try to find some common ground and find common solutions for the betterment of all women. Yes, of course, there are internal divisions. But you try to overcome those and work towards a vision that can accommodate and embrace as many women as possible.

The official UN conference was viewed as the place where a lot of action would be initiated for change. But because governments have to think about more than just women's lobbies, and because NGOs work at a much more grass-roots level for specific goals, probably a lot of the discussion and contact building that happened at the parallel NGO conference will lead to a lot more immediate change. We're wondering whether you agree, and what you think of a bottom-up versus a top-down approach to achieving gender equality?

I'd like to address something you just said in your question, that at the official level change would be initiated. In fact, by the time Beijing happened, the Platform was written. People had been working for two years on this conference.... This document came to Beijing for the fine-tuning of the document. To be quite honest, not a lot, we knew, would be changed. What we were working on changing was not the fundamental articles in the Platform, the basic ideas, but what we were debating so strenuously for were particular words, a lot of which were bracketed texts. Debates that could last the entire conference were held over one word, whether it would be included or not.

The second part of your question is which is the better method, top-down or bottom-up in terms of development and women's programmes. I can't honestly say that one is more effective, I think that they're complimentary to one another.

n and words

n interview with Soraya Hassalani

at Beijing

There are many voices in Canada who will try to undermine the efforts of the Beijing conference. Talking about the effectiveness of the official UN conference, Sharon Hayes, the Reform MP who left the conference early in protest said, "For one thing, this is a conference wanting global affirmative action for all society." She also stated that, "For Canada, the UN has no accountability since the platform adopted by the conference does not need to be considered by the House of Commons."

Do you agree that public dissent, like Hayes', and the lack of legislative commitment she refers to, will block a successful implementation of the Platform for Action?

It is my sincere hope that no, those kinds of attitudes will not cause the Platform For Action to be tabled, or cause it not to be ratified by member states. Those arguments are very common, used quite frequently by governments in an effort to thwart global feminist activity. I feel, though, one should look at Ms. Hayes' own activities and associations with REAL (the anti-choice group) and her own personal choices that REAL women hope to globally impose.... She happens to be someone elected into our national parliament. Happily she is one voice, happily there are other women who have views which are similar to many other individuals who are working at the national level in Canada....

Sheila Finestone has said that Canada doesn't need to implement any new government policy around the Platform recommendations because of the Plan For Gender Equality, the policy which says all government legislation must be assessed for its impact on women. What do you think about the Canadian government taking such a weak stance in comparison to countries like Australia and the US.. which adopted policies?

Canada did endorse the Platform For Action and has been instrumental in changing some of

the articles within the Platform itself. So Canada is acting, I think, as a leader in the international arena. I have looked at the federal Plan for Gender Equality and it is a very progressive document. What the Liberal party espouses to do, the situation in Canada by the year 2010 will be wonderful if these things could happen.... It's true that there's no real commitment, no funds, which is, I guess, the bottom line: what are you going to commit to these projects?.... We want action and not just words.... It does seem that there are some mixed signals there, and what is needed is a strong united effort and a direct policy statement on the direction with funds committed to projects, women's rights and the promotion of those.

What message does the legislative stance taken by the federal government send to the provinces, who are slashing their own social spending?

I don't necessarily know if the federal government has that much influence over provincial policy decisions, although I will say that their choice does not cause the provincial governments any alarm.... The message is not there.... If you look at the Harris government in Ontario I was just so disgusted by what recently happened in terms of cutting funding to battered women's shelters.... That...certainly sends a message as to what the position is at that end of the political spectrum.... And if you look at what the more progressive — supposedly — element is doing, like the Liberal party, then you see that the margin between the two is very small and narrowing every day with no left, so to speak, in Canada.... Social programmes and social consciousness in politics seems to be taking a back seat to deficit reduction.

Provinces like Ontario and Alberta and the federal government are really cutting back on social spending, which obviously has a particular impact on women. In this context, how can NGOs meet the challenge they face? Especially since they weren't particularly well funded to begin with?

The NGOs certainly have a daunting task ahead of them, in

light of the cutbacks which they are facing, some of them, as you mention, weren't funded all that well to begin with, now it will be even worse.

Because of these cutbacks paid workers in NGOs will be laid off, the services which they offer will have to be rolled back or discontinued. This will effect the amount and quality of work which can be done... what can be done with the available resources will be less. These are very damaging constraints which NGOs face today. However, they have faced financial constraints from the beginning and, I guess, through perseverance and very hard work NGOs will make effective change for women.

Do you think there was a symbolic role to the Beijing conferences, and to what extent do you think this was the main role?

I'm still deliberating over that one myself. Symbolic? It certainly looks like that at times, doesn't it? I mentioned before that the UN could be a vehicle for change, symbolically, in the sense that it could be visionary. It might not be able to offer much except the title and the fact that it can bring together the world community of women. Was the work that was done symbolic? I would say no. There is a Platform For Action. Yes, it's been ratified by member states... like any other UN document it is a convention, an unspoken agreement to implement these at the national level. It is the hope that national governments will do this. The work that was accomplished at this forum, nothing can take away that, it's very substantial. The networking which occurred, the friendships which were made, the positive feedback that delegates were able to experience: none of those things can be considered symbolic, they were valuable. The work after Beijing that can be done like interviews such as these... these are all going to be valuable and substantial efforts which will promote the Platform For Action and the mandate in Beijing. So symbolic to some extent. However, we hope that the symbolic can be-

come visionary and we can create a vision of a new global order, and what will come out of Beijing will come to fruition. That is my hope.

The reason we ask this question is that it seems that after the conference ended there was, all of a sudden, a shift back to a lower level of awareness about women's issues.... It's kind of hard to see a connection between what happened in Beijing and what happens here, now. That's why we're wondering how the achievements of the conferences can be translated into direct action and concrete change.

Certainly Beijing was immediately a media circus, because we had the title of a UN conference, which worked to our advantage: we need all the coverage we can get.... But the coverage died down.... That unfortunately is the

"Was this conference nothing more than just a symbolic gesture to appease a bunch of chatty women? It is disheartening, but at the same time, those conservative governments have always existed, it's not true that really they're on the rise, maybe it's just their turn to be in the limelight for a little bit".

reality of global media. I guess what women's groups have to do is make sure that if the media don't find these issues important we stay in the news....

I know it seems disappointing that now after such hype and what seems like such a progressive and exciting time, now that it's over it's gone back to what it was and you see what could be considered a backlash.... And you see these pro-life marches and these cutbacks and you wonder what's just gone on — was this just rhetoric, was this conference nothing more than just a symbolic gesture to appease a bunch of chatty women? It is disheartening, but at the same time, those conservative governments have

always existed, it's not true that really they're on the rise, maybe it's just their turn to be in the limelight for a little bit. And this is a struggle that's been going on forever, for as long as women have tried to free themselves and to be liberated and be independent, this conservative backlash has been there. I think it's just a matter of putting that in perspective and realising that it's not going to go away and as long as you want change you're going to have to deal with that.

We've asked a lot of questions about the possibly weak effectiveness of the conference. You've said a lot of positive things as well. Where do you think the successes of the conference lie?

Well, the concrete successes I did mention to you earlier are in the Platform For Action.... Other accomplishments? On a more personal level, it was truly incredible to see women from all over the world united. The theme of this conference was seeing the world through women's eyes and you truly did. And not only white women from the west who have led the feminist movement. We saw women from the south, from the east and women from all colours and nationalities and regions expressing themselves and sharing

their opinions and ideas for change with one another. Those are invaluable contributions and progress that has occurred from this conference and I guess it remains to be seen what is going to come out of the conference in the future. But the framework is there and the policies and now it's up to the individual governments to implement that policy and it's up to the NGOs to see that that information is disseminated and it's up to individuals in society to take all of these things that have been put forth and to find their personal place, or to find something personal that is relevant to them from the policy and from the work that's being done by the NGOs.

CAN "LEGAL PLURALISM" WORK?

First Nations and the Canadian judicial system

BY TOBI KENNEDY

Approximately 100 audience members crowded into Chancellor Day Hall on September 29 to hear Jacques Pierre Vanderlinden, a law professor at the University of Moncton, speak on the topic of "Canada First Nations: Legal Pluralism?" Vanderlinden was careful to emphasise the question mark in the title of his speech which had curiously been omitted from posters publicising the talk.

At the beginning of the lecture, Vanderlinden wrote a definition of legal pluralism on the blackboard behind him: "The existence, in a given society, of different legal mechanisms applying to identical situations." By the end of the session, he had a new definition.

Speaking from a few scrawled notes rather than a prepared paper, Vanderlinden related to the audience the natural tendencies of the traditional colonial system.

"We must do away with the idea that pluralism can exist within a given society or... legal order [...]. Every society has only one legal [normality] of order... a totalitarian order, because it's not going to tolerate others' orders," he explained.

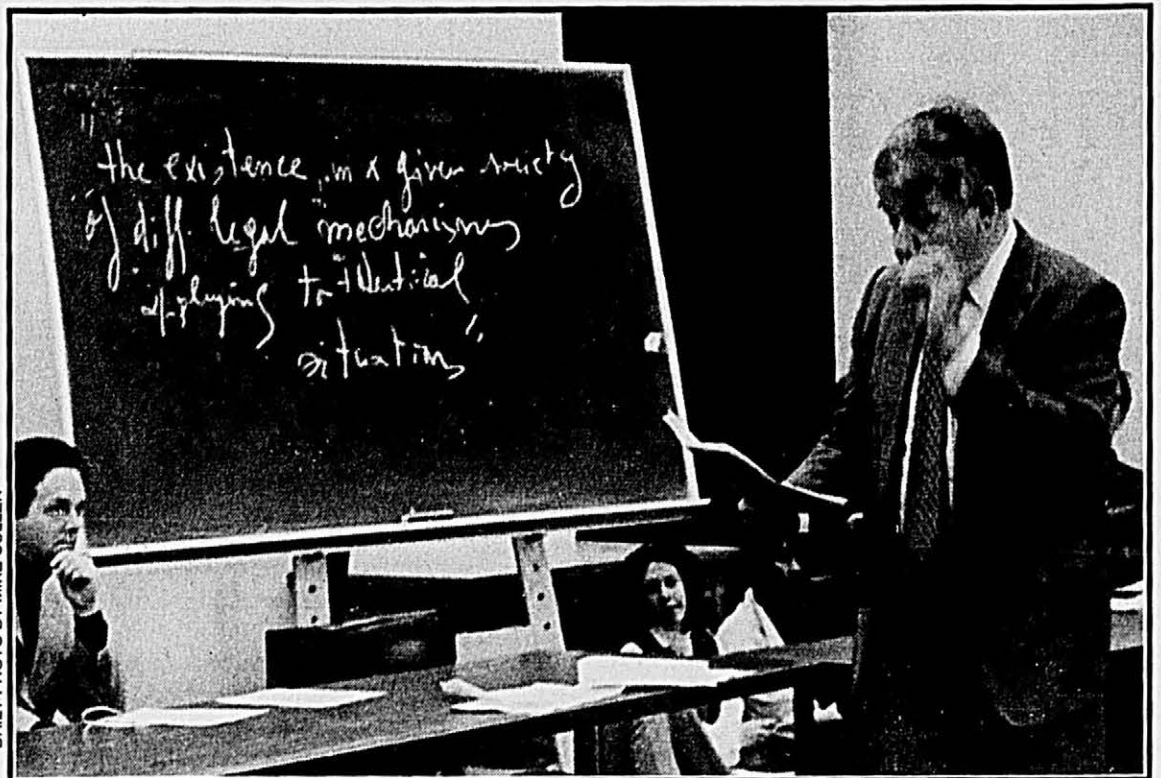
Vanderlinden made it clear that Canadians exist in a society which

accepts other orders only if they are compatible with Canadian legislation, with the Canadian concept of natural justice and with Canadian morality. He pointed out that whatever is conceded to First Nations in terms of traditional judicial practices is done so only with certain provisions that keep it in line with traditional Canadian law. This is not legal pluralism, asserted Vanderlinden, but rather, the overpowering of one system over another.

Legal pluralism, he continued, can exist only under total parallelism or between adverse and non-integrated orders. Legal pluralism, in fact, means sovereignty, although Vanderlinden was very apprehensive to use this word for fear of "being enlisted in the camp of another," referring to its context in Québec.

Focusing on the individual rather than the system as a whole, Vanderlinden introduced with a new definition for legal pluralism as a "situation where an individual is subjected to more than one autonomous system."

Vanderlinden cited professional sports, school systems and the Mafia as instances in which people function under two sets of rules: those of the



DAILY PHOTO BY MIKE CULLEN

BLURRED PLURALISM

organisation to which they belong and those of their nation.

In terms of First Nations, a viable option within this definition of legal pluralism would be to separate aspects of the legal process, for instance conducting a trial under Canadian law but allowing the specific native group involved to handle the sentencing. Vanderlinden pointed to one

instance in Alaska where an American court found two native youths guilty of aggravated assault but turned them over to the leaders of the Tlingit for sentencing.

"There were a few days of long discussion and then came the sentence, which was in fact the only thing that interested the media: ... Each of them, six months on an island, separated."

This is the only known instance of its kind and could set a precedent for a movement towards legal pluralism.

The possibility that legal pluralism could be partial, as in the case above, suggests subjectivity, but, as Vanderlinden pointed out, it may be the only non-colonial, non-ethnocentric and non-prejudicial solution.

HELP FOR SURVIVORS

Sexual Assault Centre expands its services

BY LYNN ABRAHAMIAN

The Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Students' Society (SACOMSS) gained a measure of autonomy from the Students' Society last year when students voted to pay an additional \$.50 per semester above Students' Society fees.

This extra money was to go toward improving the service that the Centre provides. According to Laurie Stevenson, former external coordinator at the Centre, many "structural changes" have already taken place. She explained that the additional money has made it possible for the Centre to train more volunteers, maintain a night office and install a new telephone line.

But the project the Centre is most proud of its new advocacy and accompaniment project. The aim of this project is to offer support for survivors of sexual assault and harassment who are seeking recourse through the McGill structures. Stevenson said the service will "firstly, inform people of their concrete options and secondly, help them talk about their experiences."

The Centre expects that two things will happen as a result of this service. One is that it will encourage people to come forward. "It is difficult for people to do so because it is such an awful system, but maybe with our support, more people will [come forward]," Stevenson explained.

The second result the Centre anticipates is to force political change. "As a help line, we're not a political organisation, but this year we want a separate section that could have a political voice, that could speak for change and push people on campus to do something about this issue. We need to convince the people that sexual assault does exist and is prevalent on campus," elaborated Stevenson.

Aside from the accompaniment project, the extra funding allows the Centre to provide trained facilitators for all its support groups. The list of groups includes those for eating disorders as well as the friends and family support group, the only English-speaking group of its kind in Montréal. Other SACOMSS future projects include a one-on-one individual counseling project.

Other groups on campus are undertaking sexual assault studies of their own. The Students' Society and the School of Social Work will collaborate on a sexual assault research project starting next month. Carla Alexander, a social work student and coordinator of the project, will conduct and compile a series of interviews with McGill students who have been sexually assaulted while attending the university.

Although Alexander is the project's coordinator, the idea originated with Lisa Grushcow, vp university affairs. There are high

hopes that this research will raise awareness among students that sexual assault is quite prevalent on campus and admit change within McGill's system.

But a study done last year at McGill shows that reports of sexual assault have decreased. Some may conclude that the number of acts of sexual assault have decreased as well, but Stevenson disagrees.

"It is not the sexual assault that has decreased but the number of reports of it because people don't want to come forward."

Stevenson expressed her utter disappointment in McGill for not giving its survivors of sexual assault the attention they deserve. She said the university's approach to the issue of sexual assault alienates survivors and makes it difficult for them to feel safe and comfortable in speaking out.

As it stands, the Sexual Harassment Assessors are the official channel available for people who have experienced sexual assault or harassment in a McGill setting. The assessors have the role of providing support for survivors as well as mediating between survivors and their alleged assailants. The result can often be that the assessor is giving the survivor support as well as acting as 'judge' or mediator for the conflict.

Stevenson blamed the hostile environment for survivors on the administration. "McGill needs to

clean up its act and learn how to treat its survivors," she concluded.

Stevenson said sexual assault is prevalent in the residences and comments on the inability of residence directors to deal with the numerous counts of sexual assault that occur within their jurisdiction.

"I call it a conspiracy of silence. If a problem erupts, there is a will among the directors to keep it undercover," Stevenson charged.

SACOMSS helps to break this silence by offering services both to McGill students and non-students. Trained volunteers maintain a confidential help line for survivors

to call when they need support. "We're not a counseling service, but we can refer them to some," affirmed Stevenson.

Through its Outreach Programme, SACOMSS offers both educational and interventionist programs that include group discussions about issues of sexuality, sexual assault and sexual relationships.

Additional reporting by Erin Prelypchan

SACOMSS is in Shatner Rm. 430; the daytime phone number is 398-2700; the night help line is 398-8500.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

The enumeration revision period for enumeration to vote in the October 30 referendum ends tomorrow. Students are advised to go to their polling station immediately to make any revisions to the enumerators' list.

You are eligible to vote if you are a Canadian citizen, 18 years old, and have been a resident of Québec for at least 6 months.

For any further information, the addresses and office hours of the polling stations are available by calling 1800 461 0422 or for the hearing impaired 1800 537 0644.

Fighting for gay and lesbian rights in South Africa

sexual orientation debated in the constitution

BY DRUSILLA MENAKER

Johannesburg, (Women's Feature Service) — South Africa's interim Constitution — the one that outlawed apartheid — is the only constitution in the world that bars discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

But the document, drafted to pave the way for South Africa's elections last year and the first black-led government, will not be finalised until 1996. Of the 14 forms of discrimination specifically banned, only discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is in danger of being omitted from the final draft, say gay and lesbian activists.

The threat comes from the identification of gay and lesbian rights as a "white issue," and the dismissal of homosexuality as "Eurocentric and unAfrican."

These criticisms come from across the social spectrum in a country that has been preoccupied with basic political rights for its majority black population.

The African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), a party with four seats in the 400 seat House of Assembly, has vowed to fight inclusion of sexual orientation as an individual right, saying it goes against "the will of god and

African culture."

Although the ACDP is the smallest party in the Assembly, it may become more influential with the lessening need for blacks to rally around Nelson Mandela's ruling African National Congress (ANC) in the battle against apartheid.

This religious conservatism is shared, albeit separately, by the famously moralistic Dutch Reform Church of the white Afrikaners and also among South African Muslim leaders.

In December 1994, white and non-white gay and lesbian activists united for the first time to form the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE) to ensure, as organiser Kevan Botha said, the "debate is focused not on emotion but on equality."

"If they get it right in the new Constitution, South Africa can hold the torch of civil rights into the 21st century."

A similar struggle

The ANC leadership has played the greatest role in having the homosexual rights clause appear in the Constitution. While in exile in Europe for many years, the ANC was supported by politicised gay and lesbian groups that saw protection of their rights as a similar struggle.

The ANC's upper ranks include Edwin Cameron, a prominent gay white anti-apartheid lawyer who represented many activists and now has been appointed to the new Constitutional Court.

The court will review the final Constitution, which has to conform to 32 principles agreed on in pre-election negotiations.

Although the new black Defense Minister Joe Modise is battling the old guard over allowing gays to join the military, activists otherwise loyal to the ANC still question the depth of its commitment to homosexual freedom.

"As an organisation, the ANC is all human rights but as individuals, this is such a 'white' thing, it is not important," Bev Ditsie, a black lesbian activist, contended.

The identification of gay and lesbian rights as a white issue and homosexuality as "unAfrican" has murky origins. To the extent gays and lesbians were organised socially or politically in South Africa, they were in white-led groups. They were seen as apolitical — isolated from the anti-apartheid fight.

The black consciousness movement, meanwhile, stressed South Africa's pre-colonial history in subsistence-based

societies where patriarchy and procreation were paramount.

Homosexuality was also linked with apartheid, as if it had been introduced by Europeans.

With little recorded black history, traces of indigenous homosexuality are hard to find. But black gays and lesbians point to the Xhosa tribe's traditional healers who were women living apart from men and the male Zulu warriors who were forbidden from having sex with women.

"People say black lesbians and gays were influenced by the diseases of colonialism, that it doesn't exist in black culture. But who can say what is black culture?" scoffed Ditsie.

Yet supporters of Mandela's estranged wife Winnie marched with signs declaring "Homosexuality is not in black culture" during her 1991 trial. She was tried on charges of torturing youngsters she accused of having homosexual relations with a white Methodist minister.

Struggling to mobilise

White gay and lesbian leaders are wrestling with how to expand their ranks to include blacks and give their movement the political legitimacy it needs to survive in the new South Africa. Non-white activists are

struggling to mobilise black gays and lesbians. Neither side has been very successful.

White gays and lesbians can drive to evening meetings while blacks have no safe way to return after dark to the separate townships where many blacks still live. Counseling hotlines don't help where most people have no phones.

In five years, the annual Johannesburg gay and lesbian rights parade has gone from 1 000 quiet marchers to more than 5 000 celebrating openly. But last October's parade had more white representation than ever.

"If a black gay person doesn't have a job, what do you say, 'Come on a march?'" asked Zackie Achmat, head of NCGLE and among the handful of non-white gay and lesbian leaders.

Achmat expects a "treacherous" fight to retain the Constitution's sexual orientation protection. But he hopes that any attempt to limit gay and lesbian rights will "have a very strong echo" in such a recently liberated population.

"The majority in power now has a feeling of what it is like to be discriminated against," said Botha. "Whether we can harness that and turn it into a national human rights ethos remains to be seen."

WORLD DAY TO OVERCOME EXTREME POVERTY

Montréal joins in the celebrations

BY GALEN GUTHRIE

October 17 has been recognised by the United Nations as the World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty. This year, Montréal will celebrate this day by organising a silent march to show solidarity.

As Claude Dimitroff, spokesman for Montréal's Fourth World Movement explained, "the 17th of October is not just a day for the poor but is a day where everybody who wants to fight extreme poverty can join together in solidarity."

The Fourth World Movement was founded in 1957 by Joseph Wresinski in France. The movement seeks to give the poorest a voice. It became an international movement for the defense of human rights and of the family. One of the first acts was to replace the soup kitchen with means to gain knowledge: a library, a kindergarten and a workshop. The movement seeks

to find lasting solutions with the poorest families themselves and condemns poverty as a human rights abuse.

Last year, 350 underprivileged families from 42 countries converged on the UN buildings in New York City. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali welcomed the delegates who had come to testify their life experiences and to offer their cooperation in the creation of a just and more humane society where everyone's rights will be respected.

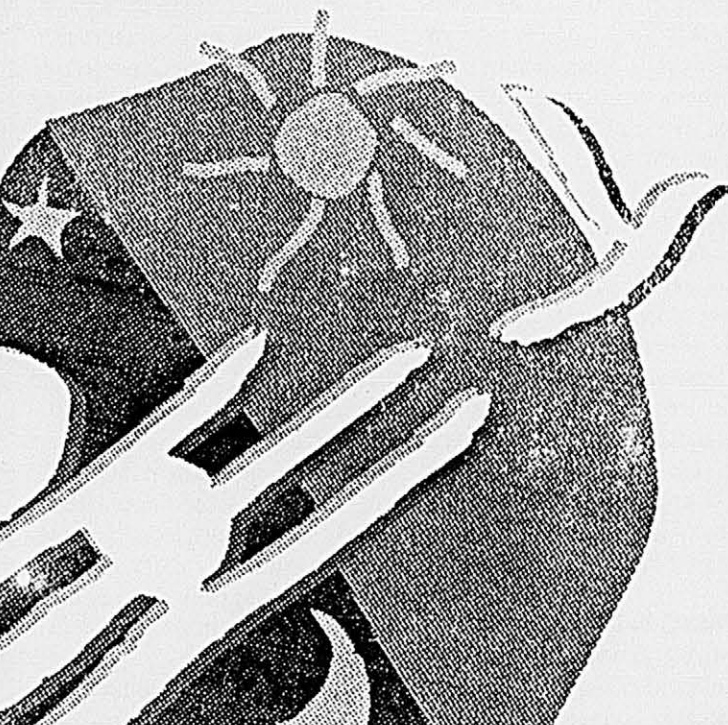
In Québec, poverty is a reality for many. Every day, the underprivileged are forced onto the streets of Montréal and depend on soup kitchens, emergency shelters and handouts for basic survival. Behind the statistics there are women, men and children.

Montréal's Fourth World Movement produced a document for the Commission

on the Future of Québec which is, according to Dimitroff, "a collection of community groups and families from different parts of Québec." Many of the participants expressed their personal views on how the underprivileged are viewed in Québec society. One participant said: "The hardest is... seeing new projects in my neighborhood and I never have an input. I live my life watching others move forward and I can't even share my opinions."

However, another participant added that Québec's underprivileged "are a force and not a weight for society. We refuse to be only considered like packages of problems[...]. We have ideas. We want to be able to discuss with others and make proposals that address our challenges."

Tomorrow's march hopes to address these concerns. Members of 100 groups will join in the march, reaching out to the



most isolated in their communities. Along with the Fourth World Movement, other organisations such as the Conférence Religieuse Canadienne, Confédération de Syndicats Nationaux (a Québec labour union), Organisation d'Aide aux Assistés Sociaux (ODAS), Solidarité Populaire Québec and St.

Columba House will also participate.

Other gatherings will take place in Québec City, Ottawa-Hull, Sherbrooke and New York City.

The march will begin at the at 2365 Grand Trunk (metro Charlevoix) at 1730h. For more information, call 279 0468

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Thursday, October 19

McGill Body Image Forum organising committee meeting, Shatner 423 17h. For more information contact Daria at 398 6017 or at dmanos@facil.an.mcgill.ca

Canadian Author's Association, lecture by Dr. Esther Delisle, writer and political scientist entitled Tact in Delicate Research. Macdonald-Stewart Foundation, 1195 Sherbrooke O., 19h30

Concordia Irish Lecture Series, lecture by Prof. Ann Saddlemyer

entitled Travels with Georgie: Research on the biography of Mrs. W. B. Yeats. Hall Building Rm. H433, 1455 de Maisonneuve O., 20h30

Friday, October 20

McGill Hellenic Students' Association's fall term General Assembly, Shatner 426, 17h. Input is welcome. Info call 272-6270.

Weekend

WENCH (Women's Empowerment Now! Causing Havoc) offers a workshop on voice strategies for self-defense. Charge of \$50.

Saturday and Sunday, 10h-13h. Info 277-3140.

Tuesday, October 24

Maxwell Cummings Lecture, Norman Austin, Chair of Dept of Classics, University of Arizona, Tucson. Entitled Helen of Troy and her Mysterious Phantom. Leacock 26, 18h. Info 398-4216

Wednesday, October 25

Temple Emmanuel-El-Beth Shalom's Women's Study Group offers a workshop entitled Stress: The Mind/Body Link, guest speaker

psychotherapist Angela Aronson. 395 Elm Ave, Westmount, 19h30. Info 937-3575.

Friday, October 27

McGill Dept of Political Science lecture: The Role of Institutions in Strategic Choice, Ronald Rogowski, UCLA. Leacock 420, 15h.

Saturday, October 28

McGill Alumni Association's Personal Finance Day- How to Plan Your Financial Future. Four seminars on mutual funds, financial planning, stocks and bonds and taxes. \$15 per

session or \$45 package price (including lunch). Ticket info 398-5000.

Beyond

Visit the Cosmodome with the McGill Alumni Association. An interactive learning experience, exploring the history of space travel and the marvels of science. Nov 4. Adults, \$9 Children aged 6-18, \$6. Ticket info 398-5000.

Rock the Deccan: anyone interested in participating in a day of radio programming on South Asia contact Ahmeer Qadeer at 285-2181.

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REDEFINING "DEVELOPMENT"

Community development in Mathare takes a new approach

NAIROBI, Kenya — Mathare is a 30 minute drive from the clipped hedges and splendid gardens of Nairobi's modern city centre. But, unlike Nairobi, Mathare is a community of packed, makeshift houses, built in a defunct quarry on land owned by the Kenyan government.

Mathare is home to at least 20 000 people, living in rusted and crumbling corrugated iron roofs, held down by stones. It represents a crisis that is occurring in so many of the world's cities, where rural populations are flooding into urban centres. As one of the residents puts it, "I had nowhere else to go when I came to the city."

Mathare is not far from the site of two recent meetings to prepare for Habitat II, next year's United Nations summit on shelter.

As one of the documents for the conference states, "Over one billion people around the world live in inadequate shelter without piped water, electricity, roads, health facilities and in most cases, without security of tenure..." Much of this is true for Mathare

Organising to help themselves

Lydia Nyambura Kinyua is 32 years old and raising a family of six in Mathare. Trained as a nursery school teacher, Kinyua also runs her own nursery in Mathare.

Some five years ago she and a few women decided to do something about conditions in their community and started a self-help group called Wapenda Afya Bidi Women (WAB).

"If we don't help ourselves nobody else will," Kinyua said.

WAB works with the assistance of a Nairobi-based non-

governmental organisation, the Development Alternatives Network (DAN).

During the Habitat meetings, Kinyua took NGO representatives on a visit to Mathare to learn first hand about the collaboration between DAN and WAB.

As Kinyua explained, the only recognition Nairobi city authorities had given the community was the construction of two public toilets whose systems collapsed long ago.

Today, there are poor sanitation facilities, no electricity, and the sole source of clean water is a tap owned by individuals who open it to those who have money.

With DAN's help, a program has been implemented to improve sanitation and reduce the incidence of disease, explained Pontianus M. Nthuli, who oversees DAN's training wing.

First on the agenda was waste management. Since the toilets have broken down, the women have learned to clean them manually every evening. According to Nthuli, thanks to the daily feces cleaning, the incidence of dysentery, diarrhea and worms has been reduced by at least 30 per cent in recent months.

Making their own decisions

The women of Mathare have also have played a role in determining what types of things other NGOs can do for their community.

Responding to a question from a representative of the British Volunteers Service Overseas, Kinyua said that NGOs could best help the Mathare women by providing Dettol antiseptic.

"We need to wash our hands after clearing the feces, because we



then have to do our cooking," said Kinyua.

Nthuli also said that DAN helped the women develop a training program to set their own agenda for change. Among the priorities selected were clean water and improved sanitation, child health, family planning and drug-abuse control.

A health-monitoring project has since improved children's chances of survival. Mothers have learned to

weigh their children regularly as a way of monitoring their health.

Nthuli said that the DAN-WAB initiative has made a difference in Mathare, bringing WAB the crucial recognition it needs.

Recently, land was allocated for a community pharmacy, and the City Council agreed to provide 15 water pumps to be operated by the women.

In the past, many NGOs have

seemed like "benevolent" foreign groups trying to help the "developing world" — without carefully exploring local needs and traditions.

As such, the successful DAN-WAB collaboration may represent a new approach to development projects, where communities participate in their own development and set their own priorities.

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As a full-time student, you are a member of the Quebec Public Interest Research Group (QPIRG). If you wish to relinquish your membership in this organization and claim your \$3 refund, come to 3647 University, 1-5pm, October 10-31.

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December 1995

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January 1996

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- 10 - Rides/Tickets
- 11 - Lost & Found *
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- 10 - Rides/Tickets
- 11 - Lost & Found *
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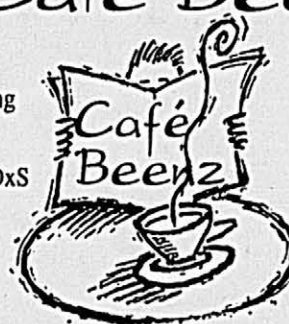


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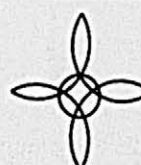
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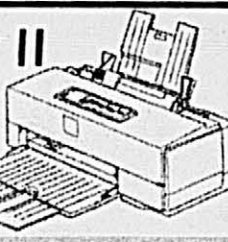
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